

Indigenous tourism as a transformative process: the case of the Emberá in Panama
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Abstract

In this chapter I discuss how Indigenous tourism has affected the representational self-awareness of the residents of an Emberá community in Panama. I approach Indigenous tourism as a transformative process that inspires the Emberá to experiment and creatively develop pre-existing cultural practices, but also to articulate their identity to audiences of outsiders. I argue that Indigenous tourism has the potential to deeply shape the political representation of Indigenous societies, and as such deserves special attention as a distinctive variant of cultural tourism. Unlike top-down homogenizing processes that rely on national narratives, Indigenous tourism provides opportunities for developing cultural representation at the local level, often by calling attention to cultural difference. Even in nations where multiculturalism is promoted as an official discourse, indigenous tourism may encourage the articulation of Indigenous identity in previously unexplored directions.

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